

Mayor Don Keil's Mayor's Message for May, 2015

Annexation has been in the news a lot lately.

I can tell you from experience that virtually no one wants to be annexed. There are exceptions to this, but they are very rare. There is no more hostile place for an elected official than at an annexation hearing where citizens show up and vent their anger. I've been at the receiving end of many of them.

The most common things people say are "I already have electricity and water – all the city can do is pick up my garbage." Or "The city can't do a d@#! thing for me, all they want is my tax dollars." And the classic "No taxation without representation."

Yes, the tax dollars are necessary, but they are not the goal, and not a windfall. There are many reasons to annex, and most of them don't have anything to do with a greedy city government out to grab your taxes.

The most important reason for annexing is strategic. We do it to protect ourselves from encroaching neighbors, and to have a voice in how our adjacent area is developed. That is what our most recent annexations did.

Cities have what is called an Extraterritorial Jurisdiction, or ETJ. The ETJ is a contiguous territory outside the city limits that is reserved by law for that city to control or develop. In a city our size, that is 2 miles outside our city limits. In the case of larger cities like New Braunfels, it is 3.5 miles. Most folks are shocked when I tell them that the New Braunfels' ETJ has gobbled up a huge chunk of northwest Guadalupe County, and extends south of Cordova Road on Highway 46. Lake McQueeney just north of the main body of the lake is all in the New Braunfels ETJ.

This is because New Braunfels has been very aggressive with annexation, and we have not.

At one point, New Braunfels was trying to annex across the entire northern part of Guadalupe County to reach SH 130. We were able to "cut them off at the pass" by annexing out along highway 123 and around to north of Geronimo.

The city of Cibolo has been very aggressive in their annexations as well, and has crept up along I-10 to just west of FM 775. They would have come much closer had we not annexed out west along highway 90 across the river to stop them.

We have also annexed along SH 130 to FM 20, and out IH10 east beyond SH 130 so we can control the economic development of that very important area. This move placed the old, traditional railroad village of Kingsbury in our ETJ.

There is also a cultural aspect to annexation. Over the past 20 years, we have taken in Windwood Circle, Deerwood Circle, Tor Village, the Chaparral and Parkview area and Oak Village North. Can you imagine the city now without these neighborhoods? We need these areas to participate in our civic society. Our city charter requires our elected

officials and our commission appointees to live in the city limits. We need these folks to add their professional talent and their intellectual capital to what we do as a community.

The city is the critical mass of organized civilization that makes modern lives livable. This is true even if electrical service, garbage pick-up, sewer, or other services are already in place. If the city is not here, there is no cultural center or sense of place or identity. There is no HEB, no TLU, no churches or schools, parks, golf course or other entertainment. There is no economic development. There are no streets and roads. There are no jobs and no law enforcement.

Most people fail to understand the importance of the city in their lives. If people think that the city has nothing to offer them, why do they live where they live? I'm sure most of them were sold on "city conveniences without city taxes". If indeed, the city does nothing for them, then why not live alone in the desert, or on Mars for that matter.

Then there is the "no taxation without representation" meme. People living just outside the city limits pay no city taxes, but their lives are affected greatly by what the city does. They have no representation. They cannot vote in city elections, cannot participate on boards or commissions and have no voice on city council. Once they become a part of the city, they have a voice, and have much more control of their destiny than before. They can vote us out!

The fact is that without annexation, Seguin would be a very small, very poor, and very backward place with a very bleak future.

Annexation is a good thing.

Gosh I love this town!